

THE GOOD: CAREFUL DETAILING, A COMFORTABLE SCALE, MIXED USES AND A LIVELY STREET PRESENCE

FERNANDO MORALES/THE GLOBE AND MAIL

Mark Kingwell's pick**ONE ST. THOMAS**

1 St. Thomas St.

This new addition to Charles Street is part of the pleasant architectural blend found at the University of Toronto's Victoria College, but the super-luxury condos within are hardly student housing. The 28-storey deco-style tower, designed by New York architect and academic Robert A.M. Stern, gets high marks from our critics for its neighbourly relation to surrounding buildings and for its red brick facade.

Kingwell: The one building going up right now that I'd actually like to live in. What I like about that is what I like about all of Stern's buildings — he really is one of

those . . . architects who love the detail. You can't be certain that this building will follow through on everything, but from what I've seen, it's a beautifully thought out, well-proportioned, humane-scale kind of building.

Crombie: I don't know why, but it works. The area is changing, and I think it's going to be part of the new 'scape. They seem to have used quality materials, and it looks like [the developers] cared for it — like they wanted to build some quality and did. So the fact it's 28 storeys rather than 18, I think, is irrelevant.

Baird: It doesn't look bad, though it's a bit retro for my taste.



FERNANDO MORALES/THE GLOBE AND MAIL

George Baird's pick**RADIO CITY/NATIONAL BALLET SCHOOL COMPLEX**

Jarvis and Carlton

This complex menagerie, on the site of a former CBC Radio studio, blends contemporary condo towers and townhouses (designed by architectsAlliance) with a new National Ballet School (designed by KPMB with Goldsmith Borgal). It includes sleek glass structures and restored heritage buildings.

Baird: It's a kind of an exemplary Toronto project. It involves some townhouses facing on Mutual Street; the impact of the towers is mediated by them. You've got two preserved restored historical buildings, and a series of new elements built that frame them. It's a pretty

sophisticated ensemble from an urban design point of view, and I think all the elements of that project are well-designed architecturally.

Crombie: I love to keep the old, love to get the new, and I don't like to sacrifice one for the other. They did a great job there. There's a very old building that was Moulton College, and then it was the CBC, but they've got this glass thing beside it and it looks great. You've got mixed uses . . . I think it works marvelously.

Kingwell: The main tower looks unfortunately a bit like a radiator, but the project integrates well with the surrounding neighbourhood.



FERNANDO MORALES/THE GLOBE AND MAIL

David Crombie's pick**18 YORKVILLE**

18 Yorkville Ave.

A crisp example of the point tower form, also by architectsAlliance: a seven-storey base faced with yellow brick greets a new park and Yorkville, beyond, while a slim blue-glass tower soars to 36 storeys. Mr. Crombie, who's particularly bullish on the design of his new — not yet completed — home, the south tower at Minto Midtown, calls this his favourite from the current crop of tall towers.

Crombie: I've known that corner all my life, and I think it's going to fit well. That's achieved through grade-level activity and attractive design . . . [A tower] works when there's movement at grade, there's

connectivity along the street and people try and choose materials that fit or create something that is beautiful.

Baird: Outstanding. . . Of the tall residential buildings in the city [recently], the best of those tend to be done by architectsAlliance. I have a few local reservations, but for sure it meets my rule of having a tower and a base. The park [by Janet Rosenberg + Associates] is rather well done, too.

Kingwell: I quite like it as a design . . . sleek and elegant, nicely turned.

How Toronto should be getting high

Between last month's announcement of Mississauga's curvy, 50-storey Absolute condo — a.k.a. Marilyn Monroe — and city council's approval this week of the Four Seasons towers in Yorkville, the GTA is showing signs that it's over its fear of heights. But not all towers are created equal. **ALEX BOZIKOVIC** asks three urban observers to weigh in on what makes or breaks a high-rise in this city

THE BAD: CHEAP CONCRETE CLASSICISM AND LOOMING TOWERS-IN-THE-PARK

FERNANDO MORALES/THE GLOBE AND MAIL

Mark Kingwell's pick**NEWPORT BEACH, SOUTH TOWER**

2111 Lake Shore Boulevard W.

Etobicoke's former motel strip has recently been hemmed in by a dense row of condos. This building, like most of the others, is rooted in the Suburban Toronto school, which combines elements of classical architecture with stucco façades and green glass.

Kingwell: There's a whole row of buildings along the lakefront in Etobicoke, and they're terrible. . . Newport Beach gets my nod for worst of a heinous bunch.

Baird: Put it this way: I wouldn't write home about any of that group, and certainly the one with the little corner cupolas is, shall we say, disappointing.

Crombie: For the motel strip, I was involved with the Waterfront Regeneration Trust, to ensure there was a setback from the water and a trail. For those who see a relationship to the water, it's a different thing. Too many people judge the waterfront while driving along the Gardiner.



FERNANDO MORALES/THE GLOBE AND MAIL

George Baird's pick**FRENCH QUARTER**

115 Richmond St. E.

Lining a busy stretch of Richmond East, at the corner of Jarvis, these two 11-storey towers by Northgrave Architects work hard to evoke the low buildings of Paris, with faux-copper roofs and faux-stone facades.

Baird: The ones that are trying to look like a French chateau I don't find very compelling. This one is trying to reproduce the detailing of a stone façade with large-scale pre-cast panels, and a cantilevered corner is not known to French classical

design. . . The formal expression of the façade is reduced to the level of wallpaper.

Crombie: I've only passed by, but it seems to meet the street well.

Kingwell: The only thing worse than the brutalist slab is the twee attempted postmodern quoting of some historical style.



FERNANDO MORALES/THE GLOBE AND MAIL

David Crombie's pick**CITYPLACE**

Front and Spadina

The first few towers in the redevelopment of the old CN railway lands have brought Vancouver-style high-rises to a still desolate locale near the Rogers Centre. Created by Vancouver's James Cheng, Architects Alliance and Page + Steele, the buildings are faulted by our critics for a lack of urbanity.

Crombie: The individual buildings may be fine, but it is not the creation of a City of Toronto neighbourhood. . . We'll have to — as we did with Harbourfront — recreate community, after the buildings have gone up.

Kingwell: In a selective misreading of Jane Jacobs, many activists see

her ideas in favour of small-scale mixed-use neighbourhoods as words to live by in Toronto. That's great in some cases, but unfortunately . . . We're now getting the worst of both worlds. The tall buildings are going up, but away from the neighbourhoods that house the activists. For all the noise people made about the ROM tower, nobody said anything about [these] 10 or 12 towers. The speed of development is practically Shanghaiese.

Baird: The ones that everybody loves to hate. If their bottoms were bigger, they'd contribute to the space on the street in a more powerful way. . . They have the strange effect of making the tower elements overly dominant.

THE PANEL David Crombie oversaw the 45-foot height limit for development during his tenure as mayor of Toronto. Now head of the Canadian Urban Institute, he's set to move into a 39-storey tower at Yonge and Eglinton. University of Toronto philosopher Mark Kingwell's new book, *Nearest Thing to Heaven: The Empire State Building and American Dreams*, is an appreciation of the ultimate skyscraper. George Baird, the dean of architecture at the University of Toronto, has been studying the city's urban form for over 30 years.

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